



HISTORIC MOUNT PLEASANT JOURNAL

Living in an Historic District: It's not just about the buildings

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Welcome to our third Historic Mount Pleasant (HMP) Monthly Newsletter. Our goal is to inform community members about historic district permit requirements, common technical issues and solutions, and other aspects of the historic district, including its history.

By Jonathan Herz

PEOPLE AND EVENTS ARE SIGNIFICANT, TOO

Living in a beautiful historic district as we do, we often assume it's all about the buildings, whose [distinguishing characteristics](#), integrity of design, setting, materials, and workmanship are what put Mount Pleasant on the National Register of Historic Places. But the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966, which created historic district standards also highlights the importance of recognizing and preserving properties where significant events took place or which are associated with the lives of significant persons in our past. While the [neighborhood's registration](#) is based on our buildings, we have also had nationally significant events and residents. And soon we will have a historic landmark nominated not just for architectural character, but also for being "associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history." A historic landmark nomination for the [Rosemount Center](#), 2000 Rosemount Avenue NW (Case 23-09), filed by the DC Preservation League, is now under review. The nomination notes: "Originally a refuge for unwed pregnant women who could not obtain support elsewhere, the Rosemount Center, or House of Mercy as it was originally called, has served a critical role in the local community for over 100 years. Its distinctive building, located in a uniquely secluded "sanctuary" landscape, is closely tied to its vital social support role. The institution has evolved over time, and for the last fifty years it has provided unique bilingual early childhood education and family support services to pregnant women, infants, toddlers, and preschool-aged children and their families, focusing its efforts on the neediest of District residents. In these ways its contribution to the heritage and development of the District have been extraordinarily significant."

MT. PLEASANT HISTORY

You may not be the most famous person who ever lived in your house or apartment

So, who lived in your home over the past 100 years? If you are curious, you can research the history of your house. Start at the Library of Congress's [How do I research the history of my house?](#), a great source for strategies to discover the history of your home. Another great starting point is Carolyn Long's [Researching a Washington, DC House: A Resource Guide](#). You can also research the chain of title on the deeds for your property at the [DC Recorder of Deeds](#) which has on-line information from August 1921 to the present. The [DC History Center's website](#) gets you into the nitty-gritty with excellent links as well, including city directories and online newspaper links.

You can get a snapshot of who was living in your home by reviewing [census records](#). It's a bit of work, but search for Washington DC and your street as the key word. Once you find someone on the street, it will also let you find neighbors.

Recent notable people who have lived in Mount Pleasant include [Adrian Fenty](#), former mayor of Washington, D.C.; [Ian MacKaye](#), musician with [Minor Threat](#) and [Fugazi](#); culture critic [Bob Mondello](#); and etiquette authority [Judith Martin](#), better known as Miss Manners.

Below, from the [Library of Congress Chronicling America website](#), which provides [access to historic newspapers](#) dating from 1777 to 1963 are some earlier notable people who have lived in the neighborhood:

[Sarah Doan La Fetra](#), President of the [DC Woman's Christian Temperance Union](#). [She died in 1919](#), at her apartment at 3152 Mount Pleasant Street NW, and is buried at Arlington National Cemetery. She probably would not have approved of our new [Mt. Pleasant Club Whiskey](#)

[Walter Johnson](#), the [Washington Senators](#) pitcher who is considered one of the greatest pitchers in baseball history, lived at the Kennesaw, 3060 16th St., NW, while his house at [1843 Irving Street, NW](#) was under construction. As a pitcher for the [Washington Nationals/Senators, he won 417 games, the second most by any pitcher in history.](#)

[John J. Earley](#) – a skilled artisan, architect, and innovator in the use of concrete, built and lived at 1710 Lamont. In Washington, D.C., he's known for the [Dumbarton Bridge](#), the [Shrine of the Sacred Heart](#), the [Franciscan Monastery](#), and [Meridian Hill Park](#). He also worked on the [Bahá'í House of Worship](#) in Wilmette, Illinois and the [Parthenon in Nashville, Tennessee](#).

[Robert "Fighting Bob" LaFollette](#) and his cousin [William's](#) families, shared a large house at 3320 16th St. NW that became a center for debate and discussions of the great issues of the day. Robert later moved to 3157 18th Street NW. William's daughter, [Suzanne](#), a [journalist](#) and author, later lived at 3152 Mount Pleasant Street NW.

[Sam Gilliam](#), the [innovative color field painter](#) associated with the Washington Color School, lived at 1752 Lamont Street NW. One of his [first shows](#) was in 1963 at the then new [Adams Morgan Gallery](#), located at 1762 Columbia Road NW. His work is now in major art museums around the world.

[Helen Hayes](#), the "[First Lady of American Theatre](#)," was born in Washington, [educated at the Sacred Heart Academy](#). Helen started her acting career while living with her parents at 3107 Eighteenth street NW. She was the second person and first woman to have won an Emmy, a Grammy, an Oscar, and a Tony Award (an EGOT). [Washington DC's annual theatre awards](#) are named in her honor. Another of her notable accomplishments is her leading role in the [desegregation of the National Theatre](#). Helen Hayes' meteoric rise in show business was well documented in Washington newspapers.

[The Washington times, June 15, 1913, Sunday Evening EDITION](#)



"As great as was the triumph of little Helen Hayes Brown In the part of Little Lord Fauntleroy several years ago during her first year as a member of the Columbia Players, it is confidently believed that her success tomorrow night at the Columbia Theater In the dual roles of Edward, Prince of Wales, and the much-defiled beggar boy, Tom Canty, In "The Prince and the Pauper," will exceed it."



"Miss Hayes was born in Washington D. C. eighteen years ago and admits that her stage debut, at the age of six. was not a success... it was not until she was eight that she blossomed out."

[Evening star, December 25, 1921](#)



America's Youngest Star

"HELEN HAYES, who comes as the star of "Golden Days" under the direction of George C. Tyler, is declared the youngest star on the American stage today. Miss Hayes is a native of Washington, her father being a prominent government official. As a little child Miss Hayes gave a remarkable performance as "Little Lord Fauntleroy" with the famous old Columbia Players... she was "featured" In Edward Child Carpenter's play "Bab," which confirmed the critics of her genius, and now, barely out of her 'teens, she is the full-fledged star of the delightful comedy "Golden Days.""

